and regulatory issues led TRAI to recommend the implementation of Unified Licensing regime in two stages.

CELL phone connections

212. SHRI DINA NATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cell phone connections in the country as on the 31st October, 2003;

(b) the number of land line telephone connections in the country as on the 31st October, 2003; and

(c) how does these numbers compare with cell and land line connections as on the 31 st October, 1998?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) to (c) Sir, as intimated by the Cellular Operators Association of India on behalf of the Cellular Operators, the number of subscribers of Cellular Mobile Telephone Service in the Country as on 31st October, 1998 and 31st October, 2003 were 9,84,352 and 1,93,46,303 respectively.

The number of land line telephone connections including Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) connections in the Country as on 31st October, 1998 and 31st October, 2003 were, 1,88,99,048 and 4,73,35,078 respectively.

Rural Telephone Exchange in West Bengal

213. SHRI Sk. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) the number of telephone exchange set up in the rural areas of all the districts of West Bengal;

(b) whether more telephone exchanges are to be set up in the State; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps that have been taken to improve the situation?